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THE WHITE HOUSE

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

Ch'iao Kuan-hua, PRC Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Lin P'ing, Director, Department of American and  
Oceanic Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
T'ang Wen-sheng, Deputy Director, Department of  
American and Oceanic Affairs, Ministry of  
Foreign Affairs  
Ting Yuan-hung, Director, United States Office,  
Department of American and Oceanic Affairs,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Chao Chi-hua, Deputy Director, United States  
Office, Department of American and Oceanic  
Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Shih Yen-hua (Interpreter)

Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State and  
Assistant to the President for National Security  
Affairs

Philip C. Habib, Assistant Secretary of State for  
East Asian and Pacific Affairs

Winston Lord, Director, Policy Planning Staff,  
Department of State

William H. Gleysteen, Deputy Assistant Secretary  
of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs

Richard H. Solomon, Senior Staff Member,  
National Security Council WIS

Karlene Knieps (Notetaker)

DATE AND TIME:

Thursday, October 23, 1975  
12:35 to 2:30 a.m.

PLACE:

Guest House #5  
Peking, People's Republic of China

SUBJECT:

Discussion of the Draft Communique  
for the President's Visit

Secretary Kissinger: Mr. Foreign Minister, I thought I might give you our reaction /to the PRC draft communique (attached at the end of this memcon)/ and in the very brief time left before our departure, you might think about it if you want to make a response.

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CLASSIFIED BY: HENRY A. KISSINGER

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Foreign Minister Ch'iao: I will first listen to your reaction and then I will tell you our reaction to your draft.

Secretary Kissinger: We received your draft near midnight. This does not permit serious consideration.

There is no point in discussing procedural matters that are now beyond repair. Let me therefore deal with substance.

The purpose of the communique is to explain to the world and to our people why the President of the United States visited China. We do not agree that just coming to China can be the purpose of a political move; there must be some [substantive] reason for it.

Now -- going through your draft. I find it, quite frankly, difficult to find a reason [for the President's visit]. The draft follows the outline of the Shanghai Communique, but in almost every significant category it represents a step back from the Shanghai Communique. In no category is there a step forward.

In the Shanghai Communique, it was the first contact that the United States and the People's Republic had had in over 20 years. In rather abstracted ideas the two sides stated their diametrically opposite views at the beginning [of the document].

I would like to remind the Foreign Minister that at that time the Prime Minister was generous enough to take out of the Chinese section language that we considered particularly offensive -- although these words later appeared in the Foreign Minister's public statements [at the United Nations]. However, it was your speech, it was not a document signed jointly with the United States.

In all frankness, the American people will ask why the President came here to sign a document which says, "The peoples of the third world countries have won a series of significant victories in their struggle against colonialism, imperialism and hegemonism." We are of that "imperialist" school I suppose. "The contention between the superpowers for world hegemony has become ever more intense." That seems inconsistent with us selling out to the Soviets. One of those two propositions cannot be correct. You can't do both a Munich and a world war simultaneously.

Above all, we cannot sign a document which accuses us of this, even if it is stated by just one party.

Two paragraphs state some positive things, but they are better stated in the Shanghai Communique. They just repeat the Shanghai Communique in a shortened version.

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Then, the Taiwan issue. We understand that the Chinese side repeats its Shanghai Communique position. It presents no problem, but the Foreign Minister knows very well that several sentences, several clauses, have been added which sharpen the Chinese position. These sentences will greatly complicate our efforts to move to full normalization -- which we have said we would do.

And what your draft says regarding bilateral matters is insignificant.

So then, we have enormous difficulties with such a document. In fact, quite candidly, it presents an impossibility of explaining to our people what we were doing here. I hate to do this in so short a time before my departure, but we did not have the document so I had no opportunity. This document is completely unacceptable, even as a basis for discussion.

Let's leave aside the document. Let me make several general statements. We gave you a document, but we did not expect you to accept it in its [initial] form. We allowed three days for discussions. We were prepared to discuss it, change it, negotiate it. That opportunity did not present itself. But we made a very serious effort to show serious movement on issues of great concern to the Chinese side, such as the issue of hegemony, on world positions, as well as some other negotiations that you are conducting [with the Japanese]. And what we said about the principle of one China in the Taiwan section of our communique -- stating it twice and affirmatively -- was a serious attempt on our part to indicate movement on an issue that is leading to inevitable consequences over a measurable period of time.

So, that was our intention. Underlying this [present situation, however] may be a more profound understanding. That is, [you may think] we want to come here to use the shoulders of China to reach Moscow, or that we want something here.

Our assessment here, which has to be our policy, is to prevent Soviet expansionism. This we will do with or without China. It is also in China's interest to prevent Soviet expansionism for your own reasons. So we have parallel objectives here. We have refused all overtures from the Soviet Union that could have been used against the People's Republic, and I explained very frankly to Chairman Mao yesterday that we have a domestic situation which requires us to put more emphasis on tactics and maneuvers than we like.

But we have dealt openly with you and you have always known what we did -- especially regarding the Soviets, because we thought we had a parallel conception with you on world affairs. But if that is misunderstood, then we cannot be in a position of being supplicants, and of giving the impression that we need this relationship more than you do.

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So I have spoken very frankly, because the foreign policy measure I have been most proud of has been our relations with China. We cannot accept either the position or the substance of this communique.

Therefore, I ask the Foreign Minister's opinion on where we go from here.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: Okay, now I will give you my impressions. First, our reaction to your draft: As you had time to prepare [the draft U.S. document (attached at the end of this memcon)] when you handed it to us on the 20th, we studied it seriously. We also think that your document as a whole is unacceptable to us. The spirit of the Shanghai Communique is that neither side should conceal its views or policy. So, at the outset of the Shanghai Communique, each side stated its differences from the other so that the world knows both the differences and the common points.

But your draft has concealed the real views of our two sides on international affairs. This does not conform to reality. Since you have dealt with us for a long time you know that we speak facts. Our words count. The main defect in your draft is it is contrary to what you have said. Your draft has failed to include the views of our two sides on the international issues. In other words, the two sides have not stated the differences between us in your draft.

If one expects to go beyond the Shanghai Communique, it is necessary for the two sides to state their respective views. Because time is progressing, and the world is changing, and, of course, the views of the two sides may also change from the Shanghai Communique. This is the first point I would like to make.

(Ambassador Bush comes in. The Secretary says to him, "I asked you to come in to be a mediator. We have a little difference of opinion on the two sides." (Laughter))

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: A second point, on the Taiwan issue: The Taiwan section in your draft shows no substantial progress from the Shanghai Communique and what is more, there is a contradiction in logic.

Secretary Kissinger: I'll accept the first criticism, but for a Kantian the second is a little bit hard to take.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: I will not go into details.

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Secretary Kissinger: But you will give us a hint that we can think about.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: As a matter of fact, there is nothing new in your draft on the Taiwan section apart from repeating the Shanghai Communique. The only change is in the word "does not challenge" to "agree." One phrase is active, the other one passive, but it doesn't change the meaning.

As for our draft, there are many ideas in our draft which go beyond the Shanghai Communique.

Secretary Kissinger: In the wrong direction.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: In the correct direction. We speak facts. Yesterday you met with Chairman Mao. You said that we had a common opponent. With respect to our views on the third world, the position of the superpowers, we have stated our views on many occasions. We do not conceal our views.

These are our views on the current world situation. They also conform to the current realities more than the Shanghai Communique. According to the tradition of the Shanghai Communique, each side can state its views. The U.S. side can state anything [it wishes to state]. We have no objection. This is not rhetoric.

I do not agree with what Mr. Secretary said that almost every paragraph in the Chinese draft is a step backwards from the Shanghai Communique. We have reaffirmed all the principles agreed upon by our two sides in the Shanghai Communique, we have reaffirmed the Shanghai Communique and stressed opposition to world hegemony.

As for the Taiwan issue, we have put our views in a nutshell in two sentences and we have added two sentences. I think our position is also very clear to you. We are not being honest if we do not state our views like this.

As I said just now, there is nothing new in the Taiwan section except a repetition of the views of the Shanghai Communique.

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As for our present bilateral relations, we also stated the present position in very brief words which also conform to present reality. In other words, what is said in this draft is more brief than what was said in the Shanghai Communique, and the substance is the same.

Secretary Kissinger: On bilateral relations?

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: Yes.

I would like to repeat that the Chinese draft was presented to you after full consideration in a short period of time. We are not rash.

Mr. Secretary of State, you raised a fundamental question just now that the purpose of the communique is to explain why your President should visit China and I remember your saying that [his visit] was unconditional. I remember discussing this matter in another building in this compound [during your last visit to Peking]. I suggested a visit by your Secretary of Defense, and you replied with the suggestion of a visit by the President. We expressed welcome [to the President]. Thereafter, on many occasions we said it would be all right if they did not meet. Anyway, we express our welcome to your President's visit. Our Vice Premier has said that a visit by your President is itself a political move. In our opinion, a communique is not important. Who invented this communique form?

Secretary Kissinger: It must be a Chinese invention. They have long had diplomacy. (Laughter)

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: There is no such thing in Chinese history. If we have a communique we don't object. If there is no communique, that is not of much significance.

I have very frankly and very briefly presented our views. In such a short period of time it was impossible for us to discuss [our two draft communiqes] word-by-word as we did in 1972. So I suggest that you leave your draft with us, and take our draft with you and continue to consider our draft.

Secretary Kissinger: I can tell you now we can consider your draft for two more months and we will not change our position. We will not change our fundamental opinion. It is an impossibility for the President to agree to such a communique both for international and domestic reasons. It

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would be suicide for him to do it. Sometimes [a situation is created where] there are no decisions to make.

His opponents on the right would absolutely destroy him. This is a reality. Even from a foreign policy point of view, with respect to hegemony, what we would do is meet your point of view. This is not a Japanese situation. We want to go forward. We are prepared to find a formula which will help your Japanese problem, not complicate it.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: Judging from your draft, you have confused the original ideas in the Shanghai Communique on hegemony. If this is what you mean by strengthening the statement on hegemony, we don't need it.

As for your relations with Japan, we know how to handle them. It is evident that they are bowing to pressure at home and abroad. The Japanese are making trouble. It does not matter to us. We are not in a hurry.

Secretary Kissinger: We do not consider our hegemony clause essential. We don't have any problem with yours as it is in the Shanghai Communique. It only raises the question of what is the necessity of saying it again. We have no objection to it. We can say it again.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: In our opinion, in our draft we have reaffirmed all the principles in the Shanghai Communique, and we have stressed two points. One is our bilateral relations, the other is opposition to hegemony in world affairs, because they constitute the main common points between us.

Secretary Kissinger: We have no problem reaffirming the Shanghai Communique statement on hegemony; this is not a problem.

On Taiwan, our impression is that we made a step forward. That certainly was our intention.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: On the Taiwan issue, yesterday Chairman Mao very thoroughly stated what our views are. You owe us a debt. This is your responsibility, not ours.

As we have discussed this problem many times, we are not constrained to tell you what our views are.

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On the sentence on hegemony [in the U.S. draft], I have said that you have confused the conception. The section in your draft has different implications which we are opposed to, such as the words "whatever the source, whether in the East or the West." And I think our Vice Premier has discussed this with you.

Secretary Kissinger: Do you think that hegemony should be resisted only in the West? We do not consider this an important --

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: Look at our draft. "Each side is opposed to..." We stated that neither side should seek hegemony in any part of the world.

Secretary Kissinger: We can accept your language. We sincerely thought that you would find that interesting. We can drop that clause. The hegemony clause is not a problem. Our views are substantially the same.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: In the first place this was raised by you.

Secretary Kissinger: This is quite true, but we thought that we were meeting your concerns. We are not gaining anything for ourselves. We don't need it. It makes no difference to us. We will drop that clause or go back to your clause.

What do you think should be done now?

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: We have stated our views very thoroughly. It is very good if we have [a communique]; we have no objection to having one. But if our two sides cannot agree, what will we do?

Secretary Kissinger: If we can't agree on the language, then there is no common position.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: We have a common point on hegemony. You stressed this to the Chairman yesterday.

Secretary Kissinger: It does not seem to have been taken very seriously. But your communique is 98 percent disagreement, and only 2 percent agreement which is already in the other communique.

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Foreign Minister Ch'iao: This is the reality, the problem of first priority at the moment. Why do the two sides have to come together? Why can't we speak it out?

Secretary Kissinger: We have no trouble with this. It is the five pages of disagreement you have to state before you can state one sentence of agreement.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: There are only four pages.

Secretary Kissinger: We will do it on our typewriter. (Laughter)

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: Last year you said that our draft was too short. This year you say that our side's is too long.

Secretary Kissinger: But you have not included the U.S. position [which will expand the length considerably].

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: You are free to express your views. We won't object.

Secretary Kissinger (with irony): Thank you. I appreciate that very much, but my point is that the impression [created by the Chinese draft] is that the President of the United States travelled 8,000 miles to express 98 percent disagreement in order to express one sentence of agreement and this after his Secretary of State already spent considerable time discussing these issues in October.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: The importance [of the document] should not be weighed by the number of words.

Secretary Kissinger: Mr. Foreign Minister, I am always astonished by how well informed you are. You saw what our press did on the first evening with your toast. What will they do with this document? It will damage our relationship! Therefore, both sides must consider the psychology of the other side.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: We don't think it beneficial to cover up our differences. This will lead people astray. Indeed, as everyone knows, we really have great differences, but we have common points as well.

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Secretary Kissinger: But it is simply a different situation when the President comes a second time, when there has been no return visit [to the United States] by a Chinese leader for understandable reasons, to restate these differences.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: This is a reality. We have so many common points, and so many differences.

Secretary Kissinger: We have stated only one common point.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: We are not discussing these documents in detail, but discussing the growth in exchanges and in friendship.

Secretary Kissinger: We can accept your point on social imperialism.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: I would suggest that you consider our draft. It is not possible for us to have detailed discussions today.

Secretary Kissinger: We cannot accept this draft. I can't leave you in any doubt [about this point]. What modifications are possible we are willing to explore. There is no possibility of accepting this draft no matter how long we negotiate it.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: We won't moderate it.

Secretary Kissinger: Basically are you saying either no communique or this?

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: In our draft we have basically stated our views, but you have not put in your views yet.

Secretary Kissinger: Let me understand you correctly. We can add our views. This is unchallenged. Are you saying that this communique with American views added, or no communique at all? Is this your position?

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: In substance. Our draft was drawn up after serious discussion.

Secretary Kissinger: So was ours.

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Foreign Minister Ch'iao: I repeat what the Vice Premier said. I suggest you take back our draft and have a more serious consideration of it.

Secretary Kissinger: I want to understand your position. Are you saying either your draft or no communique or are you prepared to consider middle ground?

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: Basically this is our position. Of course, this is a document prepared by our two sides. We can discuss it, but we won't change its substance.

We are used to calling a spade a spade. Since 1972 there has been no basic change in our relations. This is reality. The communique should reflect this. As for concrete wording, we can discuss this.

Secretary Kissinger: How shall we proceed since the opportunity for direct exchanges is no longer practical?

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: What are your ideas?

Secretary Kissinger: I was not prepared to be this far apart on the last evening. I thought that as in October, 1971 we would have a basic document by now.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: Shall we discuss this when you come again next time with the President?

Secretary Kissinger: I will have to discuss with the President what he wants to do.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: There are two questions. One is the general pattern of the communique. There are two points here. The two sides can state their own views, and then their common points. The second question is concrete wording of the communique. We can discuss this later.

We cannot agree that we cannot state our differences. This is only to deceive people. This is no good. Our people won't accept it.

Secretary Kissinger: Neither will ours.

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Foreign Minister Ch'iao: Actually what we need is to state the differences. This is objective reality. Of course, you have your problems and you cannot say we do not understand it fully.

For instance in the period before the Shanghai Communiqué [was signed] was your press so used to our words? They were not so used /to them/. So we say that you admit that the Shanghai Communiqué was a new example [of a diplomatic document].

Secretary Kissinger: I have stated many times in public in the United States that the way the Shanghai Communiqué was drafted was a tribute to the wisdom of the Chinese side, and a new way of negotiating. But that was a different occasion. It was the first contact at a top level between the U.S. and Chinese sides. That in itself was an historic event.

If we add as much as you have written [in your draft], this document will be six pages long.

I do not exclude stating some disagreement, but I think the balance between the two is not appropriate at this moment.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: You are too much used to counting the words. Why not weigh the value of a document? As you have often said, you have often read many communiqués full of rhetoric. They are long, but people don't want to read them as they do not conform to reality.

Secretary Kissinger: Well -- we will take into account your desire to state opposing views. We can send you what we think is an appropriate balance, maybe through Ambassador Bush, or your Ambassador. Then if we can agree in principle, we can work out the wording when we are here, as we did the last time.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao (with alacrity): Yes, we agree to your suggestion.

Secretary Kissinger: I think the Foreign Minister understands that what we will propose is a shortening of some key paragraphs. But he can give us his reaction later.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: Three lines like mine? (Laughter)

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Secretary Kissinger: Three lines.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: Because you want to shorten the key paragraph.

Secretary Kissinger: Two - three lines each. Yes. I will do to you what you did to me last year.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: Last year you complained we gave you too short a draft, so this year we gave you more.

Secretary Kissinger: You can be sure the statement about social imperialism will be in it.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: I agree to your suggestion.

Secretary Kissinger: Let's ... we will have Ambassador Bush give further drafts to you.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: Okay.

Secretary Kissinger: And after that we can make a decision after we receive it.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: This is not a big problem, the communique. The importance is the substance.

Secretary Kissinger: Given our domestic situation, if we have to spend the next two months defending ourselves on why we went to China, it will be of no help to you or the policy we are attempting to pursue and it will be totally counterproductive. And it will liberate all those domestic political forces that have been contained since 1971.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: Merely because we have stated our views in this manner?

Secretary Kissinger: No, not because you have stated your views. It depends on the whole context, on the balance between the agreements and disagreements and overall tone. And I think the Foreign Minister, who is more subtle than I am, understands what I am talking about.

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Foreign Minister Ch'iao: You are too polite. Okay. We accept your suggestion that you will give instructions to your Ambassador. Is there anything further you would like to say?

Secretary Kissinger: No. I assume in the meantime we will both consider each other's views. We will say to the press that we have had preliminary discussions about a communique but we will not discuss our disagreements or any substance.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: It is not necessary to go into details. You can tell your press that we have had discussions about the communique but we will not tell them the substance.

Secretary Kissinger: That will be our position.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: Your press is really a problem. What if we cannot reach an agreement on the communique? What if there is no communique at all? What will we tell them?

Secretary Kissinger: That is why it is impossible. Even if I agree with you, no one will remember all of the communiqes I have worked on since I became one of the key figures in our foreign policy. I remember only two. One of them is the Shanghai Communique.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: And the other one?

Secretary Kissinger: I knew you were going to ask that! It was the visit of the Swiss President to the United States. (Laughter)

It is not possible, unfortunately, for us to have no communique. We face a practical problem, not to turn this into a crisis -- because you are quite right, the essence of our relationship is not dependent on one sentence. We do not delude ourselves and neither do you. But for the essence -- what to me -- quite frankly, I consider the matters Habib discussed with your associate Lin P'ing of secondary importance. But for our public, unless there is some progress in tone we cannot rely on it to give impetus to the essence of the relationship, which is the hegemony problem.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: Some questions cannot be settled at the moment.

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Secretary Kissinger: I understand this. The fact of the matter is this: There are certain kinds of hegemonic moves which may now appear quite improbable, but if they ever arise it will require -- it is necessary to prepare a more or less psychological framework. They [the hegemonic moves] may never arise. But apart from this purpose, the President's and my interest in these bilateral matters end. You notice I never raise them with you. But they will be used by our public to judge the degree of our relationship, and they give us the possibility to enlist support for political issues rather than economic and technical issues.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: But there must be something practical. But if there is nothing practical in our bilateral relations, but only things of a symbolic nature, there is no reason for these things.

Secretary Kissinger: We agree, but we hope we will have things of both a symbolic as well as a practical significance.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: That is a problem that confronts us both.

Secretary Kissinger: That is correct, and that is why I believe that with the talent available to both of us we should be able to produce something. I would be glad to assign Habib from tormenting me to doing something constructive. (Laughter)

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: What I mean is that if in our bilateral relations we could put in the draft something substantial, that would be good; but at the moment we do not have such things. No talent can create things like this, including Mr. Habib. They tried this morning.

Secretary Kissinger: The Chairman gave me this yesterday (the Secretary hands a small piece of paper to Ch'iao with the word "yes" written on it) and if you teach Lin P'ing to say this, you can make rapid progress. (Laughter)

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: This was given by the Chairman to you, so you should learn this.

Secretary Kissinger: I have learned. Maybe we can give it to him (Lin P'ing). I think we understand each other's necessities.

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Foreign Minister Ch'iao: Okay. Is there anything left for us to discuss?

Secretary Kissinger: Did I see you show something to the Vice Premier -- an announcement of the President's visit that you had in mind?

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: A very brief announcement. Only stating the date. (A copy is handed to Secretary Kissinger.)

Secretary Kissinger: This is the style that I am used to. It has been a great tradition since you became Foreign Minister.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: It has been the tradition since I started out.

Secretary Kissinger: What did we say when President Nixon's visit was announced? The same thing? Can we state our view on this matter separately?

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: It never hurts to listen to other views.

Secretary Kissinger: Can we have a Chinese and an American version?

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: Here is the Chinese version.

Secretary Kissinger: It is a good translation. (Laughter) If we have any views, which I doubt, we will let you know. And we will settle on this after we have had the next exchange -- after Mr. Bush has talked to you next week. It is not an official visit unless we have one late night meeting.

Foreign Minister Ch'iao: It is better not to have a communique. We did the same last time when President Nixon was here.

Secretary Kissinger: I remember. Several nights. If we agree on the framework, we will probably have to do the final discussion when President Ford is here.

The meeting ended at 2:25 a.m.

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